

# First record of Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* for Tristan da Cunha, South Atlantic

Peter G. Ryan

**Première mention du Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes* pour Tristan da Cunha, Atlantique Sud.** Les 30 septembre–1er octobre 2014 un Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes* a été observé sur l'île de Tristan da Cunha. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour l'archipel de cette espèce nord-américaine, dont l'aire d'hivernage s'étend du sud des États Unis jusqu'en Amérique du Sud.

On the evening of 30 September 2014, I observed a *Tringa* wader flying inland from the coast west of the potato patches on the main island of Tristan da Cunha, in the central South Atlantic Ocean (37°05.6'S 12°20.3'W). I was unable to follow it at the time, but the following day I located what was presumably the same individual in short-grass pasture c.350 m inland from where it was seen the previous day. The only other birds in the area were 10–12 Antarctic Terns *Sterna vittata*, which were feeding on insects by quartering the pastures in the air and on foot—behaviour I had witnessed previously (Ryan 1985). The bird was reasonably approachable and permitted good views through binoculars before I deliberately flushed it in order to confirm the wing, tail and upperparts pattern. On flushing, it gave a soft *ten* call, and flew c.50 m before landing again on the short-cropped pasture.

I identified it as a Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes*, a species that I have observed previously in the New World, as well as in South Africa (cf. Ryan & Graham 1984). The most salient feature was the long, yellow legs, which were too long for Green *T. ochropus*, Solitary *T. solitaria* or Wood Sandpipers *T. glareola*. Some Wood Sandpipers can approach Lesser Yellowlegs in structure, but this bird had a modest supercilium mainly in front of the eye, and lacked the heavily spangled upperparts of a Wood Sandpiper. In flight, the feet extended well beyond the tail tip, and the white rump did not extend onto the back, excluding Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis* and Common Greenshank *T. nebularia*. Bill length was roughly equal to that of the head, distinctly shorter, straighter and more slender than that of Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca*. The bird still retained some vestiges of heavy streaking on the breast-sides, and was aged as an adult moulting out of breeding plumage.

The Tristan da Cunha archipelago boasts an impressive list of vagrants, including several wader species. Although slightly closer to Africa than South America, the prevailing westerly winds tend to result in most vagrants arriving from the New World, and the same is true for most of the landbirds that have colonised the islands (Ryan *et al.* 2013). Despite this, just two *Tringa* species have been recorded on the islands: Solitary Sandpiper and Common Greenshank, from the Nearctic and Palearctic, respectively (Ryan 2007, Dowsett *et al.* 2014). This appears to be the first record for the archipelago of Lesser Yellowlegs, a Nearctic species that winters from the southern USA to South America (van Gils & Wiersma 1996).

Most vagrants are recorded from the main island of Tristan, partly because of greater observer effort, and partly because vagrants probably survive longer on Tristan. Numbers of predatory Brown Skuas *Catharacta antarctica* are depressed on Tristan due to the lack of potential prey and occasional persecution, and there is a greater diversity of habitats due to extensive habitat modification of the lowlands (Ryan 2007).

## References

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Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa. E-mail: pryan31@gmail.com

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## More on sunbathing in Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus*

Robert J. Dowsett

**B**ijsma & van der Kamp (2014) described an adult Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus* in Mali sunbathing at midday and apparently stressed. They suggested this behaviour, apparently hitherto unreported in this species, was a reaction to high temperatures. However, a similar observation made (in company with Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire and several others) at Lake Awassa, Ethiopia (07°03'N 38°28'E; 1,660 m) occurred at 17.10 hrs, when it was not especially hot. The bird assumed that position for several minutes (Fig. 1), and apart from its open bill it did not appear distressed.

### Reference

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Le Pouget, Sumène 30440, France. E-mail: Dowsett@aol.com

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**Figure 1.** Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus* sunbathing, Awassa, Ethiopia, 26 October 2014 (R. J. Dowsett)

Milan noir *Milvus migrans parasitus* prenant un bain de soleil, Awassa, Éthiopie, 26 octobre 2014 (R. J. Dowsett)